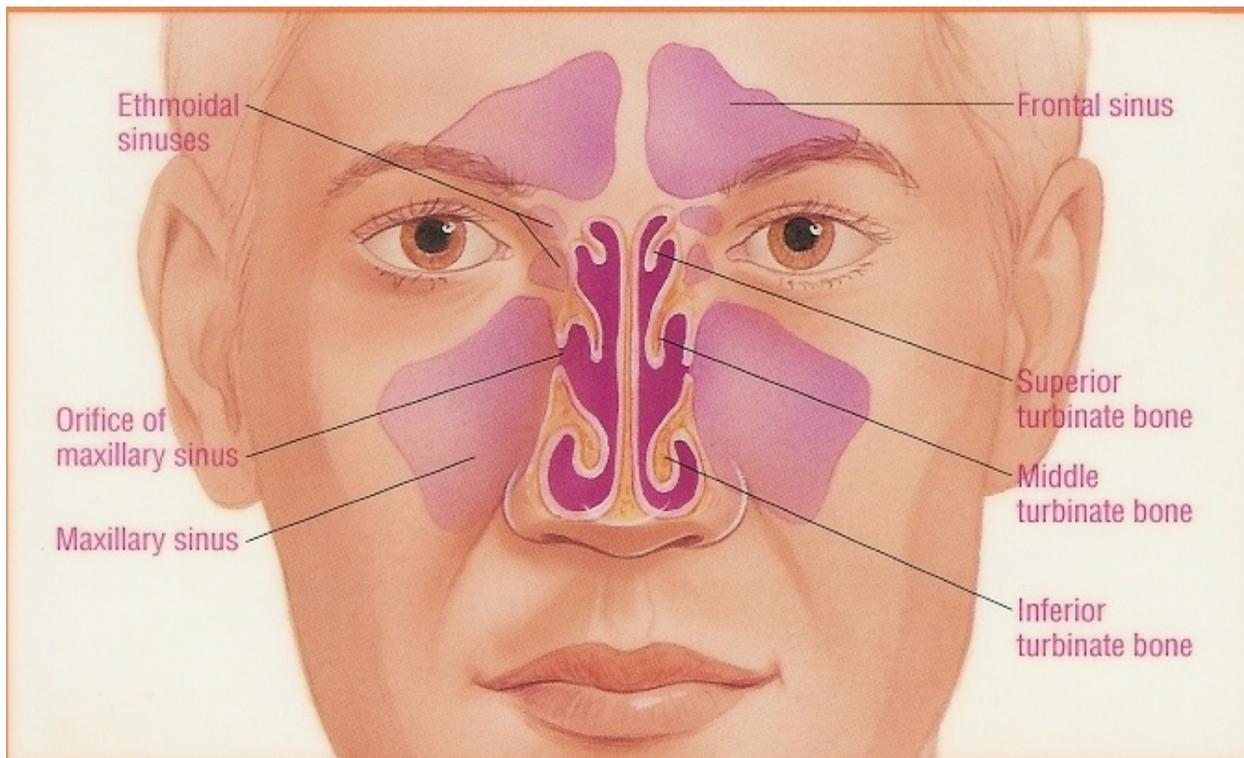


- **What are the sinuses?** The sinuses are pockets of air inside your skull. There are four sets of sinuses on both sides of your head. These are:
  - Frontal: above your eyes in your forehead
  - Maxillary: Below your eyes in your cheek
  - Ethmoid: Between your eyes, directly behind your nose
  - Sphenoid (not seen in this picture): Behind your eyes, in the center of your head



- **Why do we have them?** We do not know for sure why we have sinuses. One of the best theories is that they are a “safety feature” of the skull keeping the eyes and brain safe from any accidents like getting hit or falling down. The sinuses make mucous which helps keep the nose wet on the inside. This mucous has special chemicals in it that help to kill germs that may get in them.
- **What is Sinusitis?** Sinusitis simply means inflammation of the sinuses. Often times it can be an infection, but many different things can cause this inflammation other than infection as well. If the inflammation lasts longer than 12 weeks, it is called Chronic Sinusitis.
- **Are there different types of Chronic Sinusitis?** There are two main types of sinusitis, Chronic Sinusitis without Polyps and Chronic Sinusitis with Polyps. Different things can

cause these so your doctor may ask a lot of questions to figure out which cause is more likely.

- **What causes Chronic Sinusitis?** Sometimes a bad infection may lead to chronic sinusitis. In this case, the infection gets trapped in the sinus because the inflammation closes off the openings. In other cases allergies may cause the sinuses to become blocked.
- **What are polyps?** Polyps are growths in the nose that can look almost like bunches of grapes. They are benign, meaning they do not cause cancer.
- **What causes polyps?** If the inflammation becomes bad enough, we think anything might be able to cause polyps but truthfully we do not fully know what causes polyps. Most polyps have a white blood cell in them called an Eosinophil which the body usually uses to fight infections from parasites or molds and fungi. We think that polyps have eosinophils because the body became “confused” and picked the wrong response to something that started the inflammation.
- **What can make it better?** There are several treatment options that can make your sinuses health again. These treatments are aimed at cleaning the nose and stopping the inflammation. A combination of salt water irrigations or rinses for the nose and a topical nasal steroid spray (like Flonase, Nasacort, or Nasonex) can make most people feel a lot better. If your doctor thinks there is also an infection, you may also get a prescription for antibiotics. If the inflammation is really bad, or you have polyps, steroid pills like prednisone may also be needed. If medications do not make you better, a surgery on your sinuses may be necessary.
- **Will I need surgery to fix it?** If the medications do not make you better, or get you back to normal, surgery may be necessary. Surgery is done to remove polyps and/or open up the sinuses. This has two purposes:
  1. Surgery lets the sinuses drain normally.
  2. Surgery lets saline (salt water) rinses or medications get deeper in to the sinuses to make them better.
- **Will I need medications for the rest of my life?** It depends on what type of sinusitis you have. Often times infections and mild sinusitis can be treated with a short course of medications alone. Sometimes a small surgery is all that is needed. Nasal polyps will generally need some sort of medication or therapy for several months to years to keep them from coming back though.

**If I need surgery, are there minimally invasive options?** The Sinus Surgeons at Commonwealth ENT are trained in minimally invasive techniques such that even with extensive surgery minimal pain or bleeding is noted afterwards. Some patients may also be able to have an even more minor procedure where balloons are used to make the sinus openings bigger. This is called Balloon Sinuplasty. This decision can be made between you and your doctor.